

Thunk. A packet of papers as thick as my thumb hits the desk in front of me. Hushed groans pass through the lips of my classmates and reach my ears before I get the chance to react, insinuating that this packet's contents are only going to add to my already stressful workload. My eyes know not to be fooled by the seemingly harmless cartoon of Calvin and Hobbes on the front, and instantly focus on the boldfaced title: Term Paper Packet. While I am not overjoyed by the highly anticipated arrival of this assignment, I resist adding to the chorus of complaints humming in the background. I already know the requirements stated in the packet which lies before me: select a piece of foreign literature to be your only friend for the next few Saturday nights, and write an eight page literary analysis. Most students see this as an opportunity to showcase their *SparkNote*-reading skills. I, however, see it as the perfect chance to wholeheartedly invest myself in a work of art.

My mother fostered my love for reading at an early age. Each afternoon, we read book after book to pass time. Eventually I learned to read without my mother's assistance. I started with simple books like the quintessential children's tale of *The Cat in the Hat*. From there I graduated to more difficult texts and before long, I was losing myself in the magic of *Harry Potter* each night before bed.

I have often found myself spending hours at a time exploring the worlds that are only accessible to me between the dog-eared pages of my black and white friends. I made the journey through the wardrobe into Narnia countless times alongside the Pevensie family. I found tears streaming down my cheeks as Johnny whispered his last words to Ponyboy. I discovered Fight Club through Tyler Durden. I walked the grounds of Pency Prep with Holden Caulfield. I slept in the bunks of Auschwitz next to a young Elie Wiesel.

An insatiable thirst for knowledge fuels my passion for reading. In my experience, the best books are not those with an easy-to-follow plot and lovable characters, but rather those with hidden truths deep beneath the surface of the text. I love books that challenge the reader to make connections, question society, and reevaluate their views. With each book added to my collection comes an abundance of new insights and ideas. When I crack open the crisp spine of a new book for the first time, my mind is a blank canvas, waiting for the author to paint a beautiful image on my memory. Each painting gets stored neatly in my mind and waits for others to join it. Every experience I have, song I hear, class I take, and conversation I hold generates a new image that adds to my endless collection. The day will never come that my supply of snow white canvases runs out. The gallery in my mind will never close because it is filled to capacity.